

News from the Grindstone

For volunteers, tenants, staff, patrons and trustees of the Town Mill Trust

[e-version for e-recipients]

Winter 2011



The Chairman's Column

As we reach the end of 2011 it is a good time to reflect on the year just passed.

We have celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Mill opening with five events which were a fitting tribute to a lot of effort by many people.

Taken overall the Trust completed the financial year with a modest surplus of around £7,000. This amounted to just over 7% of income from all sources and allowed the Trustees to augment our modest reserves to cope with the inevitable demands for repairs and maintenance.

In July the Trustees spent time looking ahead to decide how the Town Mill Trust should develop up to 2017. We do not see any radical changes to the basic configuration of the site but signage and awareness of what the Mill has to offer needs to improve. It is a constant comment that visitors come to Lyme and leave not knowing that the Mill is here! I know the issue of signage is exercising the Town Council and we wish them well with their endeavours.

There have been some recent changes to the Board of Trustees.

Bob Eliot left the Board in October after 10 years as a trustee. On behalf of all the trustees I would like to thank Bob for his significant contribution during this time. Godfrey Thomas writes on page 3 about some of the highlights of that contribution.

In December two new trustees, Suzy Gallina and Phil Clayton, joined the Board. Both of these will be well known to many in the town. They have already volunteered to lead on a couple of the issues on which we hope to make progress, and we are delighted to welcome them.

Lastly I want to thank all connected with the Mill for their contributions and to wish you a Merry Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year in these difficult economic times.

Chris Savory (Chairman)

Visitor numbers

Visitors to the mill	Aug 2010	Aug 2011	Sept 2010	Sept 2011	Oct 2010	Oct 2011	Nov 2010	Nov 2011
	1,200	1,166	650	632	490	604	95	103
Admissions	£2,243	£2,093	£1,513	£1,375	£925	£1,161	£187	£228
Shop sales	£4,300	£3,985	£2,990	£2,880	£2,520	£2,365	£515	£905

Visitors to the David West Gallery	Nancy Clements et al 'We can Rebuild Her' 20 August - 25 September 5,515	Greta Berlin 'Sculpture through her Ages' 1 October - 23 October 1,950	Jindra Jehu & Jo Saurin 'Places and Spaces' 25 October - 20 November 1,773
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The Town Mill Winter Sale

Need to do your Christmas Shopping? Forget the hustle and bustle and visit the Town Mill. The Mill Shop is packed with a large selection of crafts, gifts, toys, locally produced biscuits, preserves, sweets, honey etc.

Many items are half price or less in our Winter Sale.

Why not bring your friends and family for a tour around the mill while you're here? The Town Mill is open every Saturday and Sunday from 11.00 to 4.00 and each weekday in the run-up to Christmas. (Please contact the mill for exact weekday opening times).

The View from the Mill House - Sarah Clark

Throughout the summer the beeping of the hydro was a regular sound, indicating that the water level was too low to generate electricity. This is now hard to believe as the rain drives across the Mill courtyard. The river is bursting at the seams, which is actually not always good for electricity generation as too much water can result in the sluice gate being opened to protect the houses that adjoin the leat.

There's never a dull moment here at the Mill, so I thought I would share a few of these challenges with you.

- Unravelling the mystery of 'Who owns the Lynch path' and thus establishing responsibility for the maintenance of the structure that separates the river and the leat.
- Whether to hang onto Mags or keep well out of the way as she swings on the sluice gate handle as she winds up the gate.
- How to get the light bulb changed in the light that illuminates the Town Mill sign at the top of Mill House.
- How to keep the new Mill Lane kittens out of the mill.
- How to fit a film crew, two Mary Annings and an ichthyosaur into the grain loft of the mill.
- How to keep Mags and me out of the Christmas chocolate tin!
..... answers on a postcard please!

Thank you to Benjamin Smith and Ellen Hamer for their time as gallery stewards. We also say goodbye and a big thank you to Liz Truscott, a long serving volunteer who has helped with school visits and in the shop. Chris Boothroyd, another very long serving volunteer, is stepping down from milling. Chris has been very active at the Mill and extremely supportive to Trustees, volunteers and also to Mags and myself across a whole range of activities. Thank you Chris. Many of you know that Chris also tirelessly puts together *News from the Grindstone* and helps with school visits. I am very pleased to say that Chris is planning to continue with these so you should still see his friendly face around the Mill from time to time.

We welcome Gary Willis as a new miller - he is already getting mentions in the Visitors' Book! A hello and welcome to Rob Bailey, a new shop volunteer, and to Erica Anderson, a new gallery steward.

I hope you all have a lovely Christmas and New Year and I look forward to seeing you around the town and in the Mill in 2012.

Milling Moments - Fred Thompson

Throwing money away

In the tough economic situation you would not expect those passing by the leat to be throwing money away willingly! Remarkably, this does seem to be the case and since September we have taken £40.00 out of the leat. Most of the coins were 'coppers' so perhaps they were thrown away in frustration due to being able to buy so little with them? Should we place a sign above our makeshift wishing well with a message to encourage more people to make a donation? Any suggestions to Sarah or Mags.

Cradle to Grave

Many years ago, a zimmer frame was found in the leat, prompting the draining of the leat to establish whether the owner was also in the water. Thankfully nothing was found. More recently a baby's dummy was found on the hydro screen and it is very telling that this did not result in a search for its owner within the murkiness of the leat!

The wall of fame

Our most mentioned miller is still Steve White with Maurice Liddiard, Gary Willis and Richard Weston close behind. There is also an entry in the Visitors' Book claiming that the visitors saw our mill on a programme in Sydney, Australia and they thought they just had to visit!

The Mill on TV - Sarah Clark

A number of our tenants have been successful in getting TV coverage in the past, but more recently our volunteers and the mill itself have got their five minutes of fame. By coincidence, on 21 September we had two film crews, producing different programmes for the BBC, on the same day.

In February 2012, on BBC2, look out for Martin Roundell Greene and Steve White talking to John Sargent on 'Britain's First Photographs'.

The grain loft was used by another TV company to produce a film for BBC Learning. The end result will be an on-line resource that will be used by schools.

This film needed a 'rustic setting with stone walls, wooden floorboards and good light' - and the end of the grain loft next to the window where the sacks would have entered proved to be just the spot. Before lunch a young Mary Anning and her brother were being filmed, while after lunch a grown up Mary Anning spent a lot of time banging her replica Ichthyosaur directly above the admin office!

A Thank you to Bob Eliot - Godfrey Thomas writes:

In October, Bob resigned after ten years as a trustee of the Town Mill. For eight of those years I was Chairman of the Trust and I want to record my appreciation of Bob's contribution, particularly over that period.

The most tangible evidence of Bob's engagement is the 'History Project'. Capitalising on work done by the specialist restorers of the mill, notably the millwright Martin Watts, the archaeologist Alan Graham and the historian and archivist Jo Draper, Bob and others envisaged the creation of several books recording for posterity the history of Lyme Regis' Town Mill and what was learnt during the process of restoration. The idea was to have a three-tiered approach: the main volume comprising a comprehensive and detailed account; a summary volume; and, in keeping with modern trends, an oral history on a CD.

Bob successfully raised finance from a number of sources and, working with a host of volunteers and professionals, took this concept through to completion. The task was daunting and Bob was often to be seen at 7.30 am hard at work in the Mill during this period. All three books are obtainable in the Mill Shop and they comprise a fascinating record. They are also very well produced and attractively packaged.

With the remaining funds from the History Project, Bob (ably assisted by Chris Boothroyd) embarked on the creation of a permanent History Exhibition illustrating for visitors the story of the mill and its restoration. This involved considerable works at the front of the miller's house and Bob, with his easy, friendly manner, was able to co-opt local artisans and DIY experts to give freely of their time in order to complete the task. If you haven't visited this exhibition in the front parlour, why not drop in and have a look?

Like the books, the history exhibits look attractive. Bob's appreciation of good presentation, together with an instinct for publicity, drew him into involvement in the Trust's advertising, event planning and execution. For example, in recent times, it was he who prompted action in celebrating 10 years of the Mill being open, culminating in a number of attractive events through 2011.

Throughout his period as a trustee, Bob has volunteered regularly as a miller (until he damaged his ribs in a rough sea crossing to a Greek island), as a shop volunteer and, along with his wife Frances, as a gallery steward. Happily he continues these latter activities.

Bob's academic background (in psychology) meant that he always brought rigour into trustee discussions and his direct New York style invariably cut through to the meat of issues. Overlaid on this, his sharp humour and infectious laugh always helped when things were difficult. Above all his contributions were always constructive. In short, he was an invaluable and highly valued colleague.

Thomas Hardy - Three Tales - Kevin Benfield

The Blue Hills Theatre Company performed their *Thomas Hardy - Three Tales* at the Town Mill Malthouse last October. Since the Malthouse opened, it has hosted exhibitions, meetings, concerts, rehearsals and wedding receptions but never before a play. It was a great success, with every seat being sold and The Town Mill Cheesemonger opening especially for ice creams and cold drinks during the interval.

The *Three Tales* is a dramatisation with music, dancing and poetry of three of Hardy's best known short stories. One of these, 'Destiny and a Blue Cloak', involves a water wheel which is featured on stage. Blue Hills were particularly keen to perform this story at an actual mill, and the Town Mill Trust was happy to oblige. The other two stories were 'The Withered Arm' and 'The Thieves Who Couldn't Help Sneezing'.

The production was the final event in our series of five to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Town Mill's restoration and reopening. Many friends and volunteers of the Town Mill have been able to enjoy a film, cheese tasting, the summer party, dinner with Mark Hix and now the Thomas Hardy play.



From l. to r. William Towler, Victoria Rigby, Darren Cockrill and Clare Harlow

Education at the Mill - Phil Whitehead

September is usually a very busy time for school visits, ahead of the Harvest Festival. This year was a little quieter with only two visits - one from our regular Ashfold School and another from Kilmington Primary School. Marshwood School will be visiting in February or March 2012.

When the Blue Hills Production Company came to the Mill to perform the Thomas Hardy Tales production, they also put on two free workshops for local schools. Year 6 students from St Michael's School and Mrs Ethelston's School attended these workshops, and the feedback from the children was very favourable.

All Change for Art at the Mill - Sarah Clark

On behalf of the Trustees I would like to thank all of our volunteer gallery stewards for the time that they have given to The Town Mill - and particularly to Vivien Graham who has tirelessly managed the volunteer rota. Our thanks also go to the Art Selection Committee - Jane Hedges and Jo Batterham - for the considerable amount of energy and time that they have put into selecting artists and supporting their exhibitions.

The Town Mill Trustees have been considering how to use the galleries next year to best meet the needs of The Town Mill, TMAG and the wider community. The Trustees have also had to consider how to run the Town Mill Arts Programme now that the current Art Selection Committee, Jane and Jo, have stepped down.

From January 2012, TMAG and The Town Mill Arts will share both galleries. TMAG will take up a 2-year licence for both the upstairs and downstairs galleries and The Town Mill will have a number of slots within the year in the upstairs or downstairs gallery. The Town Mill Arts Programme will consist of these exhibition slots in the galleries plus a schools exhibition in The Malthouse and an Open Art competition that will exhibit for three weeks in The Malthouse. This arrangement will be for two years, but it will be reviewed at the end of the first year.

Vivien Graham has kindly agreed to continue putting the volunteer rota together for The Town Mill Arts Programme, so we hope that our volunteers will still be interested in stewarding in either The Malthouse (Schools exhibition - Jan /Feb 2012; Open Art Competition - Jun/Jul 2012) or the upstairs or downstairs gallery (dates of exhibitions are yet to be decided).

The Town Mill Malthouse

Wednesday 28 December - Sunday 8 January: Art Exhibition by Chelsea Davine.

Saturday 14 January - Sunday 29 January: Woodroffe School Art Exhibition.

Gallery Exhibitions

David West Gallery

Opening times: daily (except Christmas Day), 11.00am - 4.00pm. Free admission

Until Tuesday 3 January 2012

Painting and Photography by Brian Matravers, Michael Stride and Peter Wiles.

Courtyard Gallery

Opening times: 11.00am - 4.00pm daily except Mondays. Free admission

Until Tuesday 3 January: 'Unbound' - Fran Norton

2012 Exhibitions

The TMAG programme for 2012 will start again in February. Details when available can be found on www.townmillartsguild.com.

Other Dates Ahead

Wednesday 1 February: Tenants' Meeting, 9.00am, Community Room.

Friday 3 February: Trustees Meeting, 5.00pm, Community Room.

Saturday 11 February - Sunday 19 February: Half-term week; mill and shop open every day except Monday.

Friday 30 March: Trustees Meeting, 5.00pm, Community Room.